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Ref: DO278-19
October 15, 2019

The Honorable Jared Huffman, Chairman
Water, Oceans, Wildlife Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom McClintock, Ranking Member
Water, Oceans, Wildlife Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Huffman and Ranking Member McClintock,

Our nation has a proud tradition of caring for its diverse array of fish and wildlife that are important to our economy, our traditions, our communities, and our general wellbeing. I am writing today to express my full support of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act and advance this important legislation through the House Natural Resources Committee.

As you know, states have traditionally managed wildlife species, except those listed as threatened or endangered. Some of these species are thriving due to the good conservation work carried out by state agencies, outdoorsmen and women and other partners, yet 12,000 species nationally are facing growing challenges and are in steep decline – increasing their possibility of becoming endangered. Strong state management and conservation that is adequately funded, can prevent the need for the emergency room and expensive response of the Endangered Species Act.

In Montana alone there are 120 terrestrial and aquatic species considered to be of significant conservation concern with five species listed under federal *endangered* species protection, seven more listed as federally *threatened*, and one more under consideration for listing. A dedicated and sustainable funding mechanism is lacking for the continued state management of these species even though stable funding and a proactive approach to species protection avoids the high costs of recovery, increases recreational opportunities, provides ecological benefits, and brings regulatory certainty to business enterprises.

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R. 3742) would dedicate \$1.3 billion annually into the federal Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program. If fully funded this act would provide Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks nearly \$30 million dollars to implement the proactive, voluntary, and incentive-based measures that have been proven to prevent threatened and endangered species listings. This funding would allow Montana and other states to take a more active role in the recovery and management of

federally listed species as proposed in current ESA reform discussions. Combined with the funding of critical US Fish and Wildlife Service programs, we can create a seamless state-federal partnership. Private landowners and all partners will benefit greatly from passage of this bill through grant programs and incentive programs. New funding will also benefit the expansion of public access for wildlife-related activities and support increased wildlife conservation education efforts.

The Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission and the Montana State Parks Board both signed resolutions in support of this initiative last year. Hundreds of national and local organizations have voiced their support for H.R. 3742 including Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Forest Landowners Association, Montana Audubon, and Montana Wildlife Federation.

Passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act will represent the largest investment in conservation funding in more than a generation. This legislation will help ensure that future generations of of Montanans – and all Americans -- can enjoy the same abundant fish, wildlife, and outdoor recreation opportunities that we have today. We in Montana appreciate your consideration of our request to support and advance this bill in the 116th Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Martha Williams". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Martha Williams
Director

C: Paul Sihler, FWP Chief of Staff
Patrick Holmes, Governor's Office